

## 'Military Advice For A Strong President'

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# Excessive Civilian Control Of Services Is Hit

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(Sun Military Correspondent)

Washington, May 30—Some of the sharpest criticism yet published against excessive civilian dominance in actual military operations is presented in the new issue of *Army* magazine, issued today.

This is the main publication of the Association of the United States Army, wholly independent of the Pentagon and headed by retired, rather than active, officers. But it traditionally reflects the opinions of the service, even though the articles are specifically presented as the "personal opinion" of the authors.

### Article By Legere

The criticisms referred to are mainly in a article entitled "Military Advice for a Strong President" by Col. Lawrence J. Legere, Jr., an airborne and infantry veteran of World War II and Korea and of staff assignments to the Pentagon, the White House, NATO and Berlin headquarters.

But, besides a vigorous indorse-

ment of his article, the magazine remarks editorially:

"Too often of late military opinion has been given a polite hearing and quick brush-off... The (Cuban) affair suggests that success in cold war takes something more than the playing of a few fast tunes by ear.

"Good staff work may be cumbersome but it more than makes up for it in thoroughness. This is a lesson that bright young men should be able to learn quickly."

### Written Before Inauguration

Colonel Legere's discussion of leadership principles and of relations between the White House and the professional military chiefs, the desired relations frequently being immediate, rather than solely via a civilian Secretary of Defense—was prepared before the Kennedy Administration took office, the editors pointedly state.

"It opens with a blunt declaration that 'if he is to be a decisive President, Mr. Kennedy will have to make changes in the system used by the soldier-

President who preceded him." It continues:

"Civilian control over military men and policy includes the idea of ultimate and responsible civilian authority answerable to the people. It does not necessarily include the idea of civilian officials layered throughout a defense establishment to help compensate for the alleged shortcomings of military minds....

"One authority has found that civilian control, like state's rights, can cover a variety of sins, and suggests that 'it is always necessary to ask which civilians are to do the controlling.'

### "Political Decisions"

"In essence, civilian control over the military should be interpreted so as to provide responsible civilian political decision at top level, without hobbling professional performance in professional roles, including the tendering of military advice to the President."

The National Security Council's functioning, long ago publicly criticized by Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, former Chief of Staff, is

reviewed at some length here. There is particular note of the

quick "briefing" given to the President, just before an NSC meeting.

"On vital issues," says Colonel Legere, "briefing is not enough. ... The President needs, above all, detailed information from the responsible principals. ... He must not wait until the very last phase of the deliberation of others before coming to grips with acts of choice. Decisiveness alone, like briefing alone, is not enough.

### Eisenhower Mentioned

"Military advice, especially of a kind to point up sharp issues, was inhibited by President Eisenhower's known preference for agreement among his military advisers and by the layers of authority intervening between them and both him and the NSC....

"The most significant military advice sought at NSC level since 1953 was in support of the New Look of that year and later, which set the pattern for the military posture still prevailing and

which was conceived, without responsible military participation, primarily as a plan to save money."

The article expresses surprise that "sometimes individuals of a more sophisticated order of intellect and experience," on the one hand, complain that military men are incapable in the arts of discussion and, on the other, criticize the Joint Chiefs for "inter-service bickering" instead of immediate disciplined agreement.

"Many of our most distinguished citizens have begun to stress the need for acid-bath consideration of sharply divergent national policy alternatives, but why do they draw the line at hard alterna-

tives of military policy? Colonel Legere inquires.

Among his conclusions are these:

"Civilian control over the military should not be so interpreted as to inhibit direct contact on important issues between a strong President and his principal military advisers. The NSC system should provide for more direct participation by top military professionals.

"The chief-of-staff-type solutions to what is contemptuously called 'bickering' would tend to obscure the alternative military policy proposals he needs to receive."